1: Bowen C-4 (1945-1947) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

feet in diameter, it is easily seen under water, and thus more easily avoided than the *dawl*. The Arabs have no fear of the sea turtle and they relate that when they find one of these on the pearl banks, they ride it to the surface by grabbing it behind the neck and directing it upward.

But the dangers from sharks and devilfish (rays) are slight compared to the physical danger resulting from simply driving oneself past the limit of human endurance. The "bends" are a common affliction among the divers and may cause severe pains in the joints, paralysis, or even death. Suppuration of the eardrums and rheumatism are also common. The divers may lose blood from surfacing too quickly or from staying under too long; Frederick Simpich tells of seeing a man come up from a 10-fathom dive bleeding at the nose as if someone had hit him with a ball bat.[31] Whitelock states that the divers of the Trucial Coast were very emaciated and suffered from inflamed eyes, which they treated with antimony.[32]

Divers never eat while working, except for a sip of tea or water, as food would cause nausea. When the sun has sunk so low that diving stops, they eat a few dates or a little rice and drink a little tea, but that is all. This is one of the reasons why they become so weakened and emaciated during a season. Sleep is the only energy builder the divers have.

OPENING THE OYSTERS

With dawn the first activity of the day is the opening of the oysters caught the day before. By this time the oysters have been out of the water long enough for their shells to open, so that one does not have to fight them. The oysters are not divided according to divers, but are simply piled in sacks on the deck, so that no one knows exactly who caught the one that may contain the great pearl. After the valves are parted, the openers knead through the flesh, extract any pearls, and throw the shells and the meat overboard. Less than one-third of the oysters yield pearls and these are mostly "seed pearls," those very small irregularly-shaped pearls which might well be called "pearl dust."

[31] F. Simpich, *National Geographic Magazine*, vol. 36 (1919), pp. 369–93.
[32] H. H. Whitelock, *op. cit.*, pp. 38, 44.

stinging tentacles that can easily put out an eye. There is also a needle urchin (*Diadema*), first reported from the Persian Gulf in 1949.[9] This urchin has spines more than a foot long, which can cause nasty, slow-healing wounds. However, as the urchin is several feet in diameter, black, and slow-moving, it is more easily avoided than the dawl.

Pearl divers suffer from a variety of diseases, most of which can be directly traced to their occupation. Open sores and skin ulcers result from encounters with the dawl and scrapes against coral and other sharp objects. Suppuration of the eardrums, rheumatism, and nosebleeds are common. Inflamed eyes are always a sign of the pearl diver. Persian Gulf divers are more susceptible to the "bends" than divers who use suits, since they must surface as rapidly as possible.

Divers never eat while they are working. When the day's diving is finished, the diver has some rice, dates, and tea, but not much else; sleep is his only energy builder. Every 10 days or so the divers get a rest, and every three weeks or so the dhows put in for food and water unless they have been revictualed at sea.

In recent years Ras Tanura has become a center of activity for the pearling fleet off its shores; for the oil company's installations can now pump an abundance of fresh water into the water tanks of the dhows much faster than it can be transferred by waterskins. The larger vessels anchor for the night on the banks; the smaller vessels sometimes take shelter if it is available. Some vessels of the pearling fleet replenish their water supply from the submarine springs that gush into the Persian Gulf in numerous places along the Arabian littoral. Relatively fresh water can be brought up in a waterskin by a diver. One of these springs, marked by a spar buoy, is to be found a few miles north of Jubail.

The first duty of the day on a pearling dhow is opening the previous day's oysters, which are heaped on deck in a large pile so that no one knows who found the oyster which may produce the rare gem. The muscles of the oysters relax enough overnight so that it is not difficult to open them. Less than a third of the oysters yield pearls, and these are usually only very small seed pearls.

Pearls are sometimes bought on the pearl banks by brokers who travel around in their own boats trying to get the best pearls before other brokers hear of them, and trying to get a valuable pearl before a nakhoda realizes its value. But whether the pearls are sold on the banks or at Bahrein, they

[9] A. H. Clark and R. LeB. Bowen, Jr., Echinoderms of Tarut Bay and Vicinity, Saudi Arabia, *Amer. Museum Novitates*, No. 1390, 1949.